United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.18

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
11 November 2002

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 30 October 2002 at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (*continued*)

Agenda item 118: Human resources management (*continued*)

Human resources management reform (*continued*)

Monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (*continued*)

Composition of the Secretariat (*continued*)

Amendments to the Staff Rules (*continued*)

Mandatory age of separation

Consultants and individual contractors (*continued*)

Employment of retired former staff (*continued*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-66502 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (*continued*) (A/57/7/Add.4 and A/57/285)

1. **Mr. Iossifov** (Russian Federation), welcoming the detailed report of the Secretary-General on the capital master plan (A/57/285) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/57/7/Add.4), said that Member States must now take a clear decision on the strategy for further action so that the Secretariat could proceed expeditiously with the practical development of the options and approaches chosen by the General Assembly. It was also important for the host country and the municipal authorities of the City of New York to have a clear idea of their role, which should, in his view, encompass the provision of financial support to the project.

2. His delegation agreed that the first approach, as outlined by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 40 to 42 of his report (A/57/285), represented the most desirable way of implementing the capital master plan. Noting that the cost of the capital master plan would increase at the rate of $35 to $40 million per year in the event of any delay, he proposed that the Secretariat should find ways of expediting the project. In that connection, he looked forward to the submission of more detailed estimates of expenditure. Should the General Assembly choose the first approach, it would be important to ensure that the new building not only met the Organization's current needs, but also took into account its future requirements, as well as being in keeping with the architectural character of the Headquarters complex. Lastly, his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that a separate and distinct special account should be established for income and expenditures related to the capital master plan.

3. **Mr. Yuwono** (Indonesia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. There was now little doubt that the capital master plan had to be implemented in one way or another. The current facilities were more than 50 years old and subject to breakdowns that disrupted United Nations activities and posed health and security risks. Moreover, the alternative of escalating costs for the maintenance and repair of the existing facilities was expected to be less satisfactory in terms of the adequacy of the facilities and more expensive in terms of cost.

4. While in principle the capital master plan should be partly financed by apportioning the expenses among Member States, given the slowdown in the world economy many Member States lacked the resources to fund even needed domestic programmes for reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium development goals. Developing countries were also the hardest hit by the current economic downturn and could not necessarily afford additional contributions to fund the capital master plan. If additional contributions were needed, they should be sought only from those Member States that had the ability to pay.

5. Alternative means of financing the capital master plan should be explored. Given the benefits that accrued to the host nation, it was reasonable to expect greater cooperation from that State, including cooperation in the area of finance. Voluntary contributions from Governments and other sources should be considered, as should the proposal that the plan should be financed through an interest-free loan from Member States. What was important was that the capital master plan should be implemented without delay, that a firm proposal, including financing arrangements, should be prepared for the consideration of the General Assembly at its current session, and that, once implemented, the plan should have sufficient finance and oversight so that it could be carried through in the shortest possible time, with minimum dislocation of the Organization's activities and in accordance with established rules.

6. **Mr. Anderegg** (Switzerland), noting that the United Nations Headquarters complex did not meet current building and fire safety codes, energy efficiency standards or modern security requirements, said that it was imperative to decide expeditiously on the implementation and financing of the capital master plan. He welcomed the efforts of the City of New York in support of the project and expressed appreciation for its recent offer regarding the construction by the United Nations Development Corporation of a swing space building adjacent to the Headquarters complex. That would clearly represent the most desirable solution in terms of project cost and duration, potential cost

overruns and the impact on the Organization's work. It would also allow for the consolidation of United Nations programmes and agencies currently scattered in commercially leased space in nearby buildings, once the Headquarters building was renovated.

7. Having hosted international organizations for more than 100 years, Switzerland had extensive experience of the various options for financing the construction and renovation of premises. In the light of that experience, his delegation would favour the financing of the capital master plan through interest-free loans from Member States. Citing the example of his own Government, he emphasized that host countries had a special responsibility in that regard. His delegation would be reluctant to have recourse to commercial borrowing because of the legal and financial implications. Voluntary contributions should be sought for the upgrading of specific Headquarters facilities. However, the implementation of the capital master plan should not be made conditional on the receipt of such contributions. The baseline scope represented the minimum that was required; his delegation therefore looked forward to discussing the inclusion of the proposed scope options set out in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285).

8. Mr. Ha Chan-ho (Republic of Korea) said that it was by now clear to most delegations that the United Nations Headquarters complex required major repairs and refurbishing and that the current reactive approach was not a viable long-term option, since it would become inefficient and expensive as the buildings aged further. The capital master plan was therefore the only suitable approach and the only question that remained was how to implement the plan in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

9. The report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285) proposed a number of options for the implementation of the capital master plan. In the view of his delegation, the scope of the work should not be limited to satisfying current building and safety requirements but should also be designed to address future needs. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of adding certain elements of the proposed scope options to the baseline scope

10. With regard to the method of implementation of the plan, his delegation supported the first approach, which would consist in relocating all the functions of the Headquarters complex for the duration of the construction period in order to reduce the risk of cost overruns, delays, disturbance and perceived risk of exposure to asbestos. That approach would also lower costs and shorten the refurbishment period by at least one year. He understood that the host city had indicated its willingness to consider the construction of a new building, which would provide swing space during the refurbishment period. As far as his delegation was aware, however, that offer had not been made in a formal commitment and further administrative and legislative actions were needed for its substantiation. His delegation would welcome clarification of the host city's intentions in the matter.

11. On the question of financing, the host Government, the City of New York and the State of New York had played an important role in financing the construction of the current Headquarters complex. In many other cases, host Governments had made significant contributions to the maintenance of United Nations assets in their respective countries. Whatever approach was taken, the substantial financial and non-financial support of the host Government and local authorities would be essential for the successful implementation of the capital master plan. His delegation also noted the Secretary-General's indication that financing might take the form of an interest-free loan to be repaid from additional assessed contributions over time. The key to the successful implementation of the plan was to secure stable financing and, since delays in any phase of its development could have a significant impact on the overall cost of the project, the funding arrangement should be developed as early as possible and submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration. In that regard, mutual understanding and close cooperation between the Organization and the host Government were essential.

12. Development of the project, however, should not be contingent on the final decision on funding arrangements. His delegation supported the proposal that the Secretariat should be authorized to proceed with the design process for the first approach and that the amount of $22.5 million should be appropriated for the biennium 2002-2003, pending a final decision on funding arrangements by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

13. The capital master plan was a project of enormous complexity that required the assistance of numerous experts and consultants. The management

team should therefore have the professional capability to supervise the implementation of the project, and the relevant regulations and rules of the United Nations should be applied at all stages.

14. **Mr. Niwa** (Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services) welcomed the broad agreement in the Committee on the necessity of implementing the capital master plan. The Advisory Committee had conducted a thorough review of the Secretary-General's proposals, producing strong recommendations with which the Administration fully concurred. The General Assembly was now being asked to send a signal that would allow the Administration and the host Government authorities to move forward with the project. The next steps in the process would be: a decision by the Assembly on the scope options presented; an indication of the wishes of Member States with respect to the proposal of the City of New York for the construction of a swing space building adjacent to the Headquarters complex; and approval by the Assembly of the funding required for the preparation of detailed design documents in 2003 and 2004.

15. Turning to the concerns raised by Member States, he said that the Administration recognized the importance of oversight with respect to the development and implementation of the capital master plan and the role of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Board of Auditors in that regard. It also acknowledged the need to comply with the financial regulations and rules of the United Nations. His Office had already made a presentation to OIOS on certain substantive aspects of the capital master plan and had briefed the Board of Auditors the previous week.

16. The City of New York had done everything possible to facilitate the capital master plan. The information on the new swing space and consolidation building proposal contained in annex I to the report of ACABQ (A/57/7/Add.4) had been provided by the City and the United Nations Development Corporation with a view to ensuring that Member States were fully apprised of all aspects of the proposal. A timely decision was required from the General Assembly so that the City could request the necessary approvals and proceed with the construction of the new building within the proposed time frame.

17. With regard to financing, the Secretary-General considered that the precedent of 50 years earlier represented the best model for the project. He was therefore proposing that similar arrangements should be put in place for the capital master plan. The Administration understood that the project would have to be clearly defined in order for Governments to approve funding, and every effort would be made to find appropriate private-sector donors. The proposed advisory board would seek to achieve a balance between the wishes of donors and the need to maintain architectural harmony in a non-commercial environment. Contracts for the implementation of the project would be awarded following an international competitive bidding process. While good management would be vital in preventing cost overruns, the time factor would also be critical, since any delay would add to the cost of the project. It was therefore important to ensure that the decision-making process itself did not become a bottleneck.

18. Other concerns raised by Member States, including the design and location of conference rooms, possible disruption to meetings, the impact on parking facilities, the level of security envisaged and the link to other security initiatives, the involvement of the funds and programmes and the cost benefits of consolidation, would be addressed in informal consultations.

Agenda item 118: Human resources management (*continued*)

Human resources management reform (continued) (*A/57/293 and A/57/469*)

Monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (*continued*) (A/57/276 and A/57/469)

Composition of the Secretariat (*continued*) (A/57/414; A/C.5/56/L.7)

Amendments to the Staff Rules (*continued*) (A/57/126)

Mandatory age of separation (A/56/701 and A/56/846; A/C.5/56/CRP.1 and Add.1)

Consultants and individual contractors (*continued*) (A/57/310 and A/57/469)

Employment of retired former staff (*continued*) (A/57/413 and A/57/469)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (*continued*) (A/56/956 and Add.1)

19. **Mr. Hao** Bin (China) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Human resources management reform was an important component of United Nations reform. In that connection, his delegation welcomed such measures as the delegation of authority for recruitment and promotion, the development of electronic human resources management tools, the streamlining of policies and rules, the promulgation of a mobility policy, the enhancement of human resources planning, the introduction of generic job profiles and the establishment of a comprehensive career development system.

20. Delegation of authority, while necessary, must be accompanied by steps to strengthen the monitoring capacity of the Office of Human Resources Management so as to prevent such problems as cronyism, abuse of power and discrimination. He noted with satisfaction the introduction of programme management plans and human resources action plans, the setting up by The Office of Human Resources Management of a system to monitor compliance by managers with the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) and the establishment of the Accountability Panel. In his view, the Office should monitor all aspects of human resources management. The division of responsibilities in the area of human resources management between the Office and other Departments should be more clearly delineated, and new approaches to monitoring, including the introduction of measurable targets, should be explored.

21. Concerning the geographical distribution of staff, he said that, while there had been a reduction in the number of unrepresented Member States, the situation of the underrepresented Member States had not improved significantly, and the representation of developing countries in posts at the middle and senior levels remained low. In order to rectify that situation, the Office of Human Resources Management should urge departments and offices of the Secretariat to recruit young professionals who had passed national competitive recruitment examinations. He noted that 54 per cent of the qualified candidates in 2001 had yet to be recruited. The recruitment of external candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries to fill vacancies at the middle and senior levels would also help to achieve equitable geographical distribution.

22. The average age of the Secretariat staff was somewhat high, and his delegation was concerned that increasing the mandatory age of separation for staff members appointed prior to 1 January 1990 to 62 years might exacerbate the situation, as well as adversely affecting gender balance and job prospects for young professionals and women in the Secretariat. Given the complexity of those issues, further studies were needed before any decision was taken.

23. Lastly, while there was a need for more flexible contractual arrangements that were responsive to the organizational needs of the United Nations, it was important for the Secretary-General to consult with Member States, as well as staff, on that issue.

24. **Mr. Yeaw** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia attached great importance to the Organization's human resources. Without its staff, even with the most advanced information technology available, the Organization would find it difficult to carry out its important work. While two years was too short a period to see tangible results, the Secretariat should continue to implement human resources policies and programmes to further improve the Organization's day-to-day activities based on the principles of justice, equitable geographical distribution, transparency and gender balance. For their part, staff members should be of the high quality demanded by Member States. His delegation agreed that it was time to consolidate and institutionalize all the changes that had been made thus far. It noted with satisfaction that geographical distribution had been prioritized and that the issue of the mobility of staff at the junior Professional level would be addressed.

25. The introduction of the new web-based Galaxy system for the recruitment of new staff members symbolized the Organization's desire to move forward with the times. When fully operational, the system would not only reduce the length of the recruitment process but also enhance the transparency and efficiency of the placement process.

26. **Mr. Allyev** (Azerbaijan) said that a sound human resources policy was fundamental for the effectiveness and sustainability of the Organization's work and his delegation was therefore pleased to acknowledge the success of the reform programmes that had been implemented over the previous four years. The introduction of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) and the Galaxy staff selection system would considerably increase the Organization's ability to attract and retain staff of the highest calibre and would make it possible to avoid the use of expensive external consultants. His delegation looked forward to receiving from the Secretary-General a comprehensive analytical report on the achievements of human resources management reform, with sufficient statistical data, at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

27. In section IV, paragraph 8, of its resolution 55/258, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to develop a programme and set specific targets for achieving equitable geographical representation for all unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. Under the new system, whereby heads of departments or offices were responsible and accountable for making final decisions on the selection of new staff, they were required to select candidates for recruitment who were considered to be the best suited to the functions of the post in question and were also required to take into account the Organization's human resources objectives and targets as reflected in the departmental human resources action plan, especially with regard to geographical representation and gender (A/57/293, para. 76 (c)). His delegation wondered whether managers might consider those requirements as no more than recommendations leaving them room for recruitment decisions based mainly on operational needs and without due attention to the factor of geographical representation. His delegation believed that might be one of the reasons why some Member States were overrepresented in the Secretariat, a number were unrepresented and many more were either underrepresented or represented at a level below the midpoint of their respective range. There was a danger that, under a decentralized system for decision-making on recruitment, such imbalances might increase unless there was an appropriate mechanism to ensure proper implementation of the principle of equitable geographical representation, which was fundamental to the Organization.

28. His delegation also attached importance to the issue of attracting suitable young professionals to the Organization through national competitive examinations. Although the efforts of the Secretariat in that direction had resulted in an increase in the number of countries invited to participate in the national competitive examinations between 1998 and 2003, the number of Professional staff recruited through national competitive examinations remained low and many of the successful candidates remained on the roster of candidates without actually being recruited. His delegation believed that the root of the problem was reflected in General Assembly resolution 55/258, section IV, paragraph 12, which states that some programme managers were still reluctant to recruit candidates selected through national competitive examinations. That situation needed to be corrected.

29. In conclusion, he drew attention to the unfavourable position of those developing and transitional countries that were represented below the midpoint of their range with the lower limit equal to 1. Employment in the Secretariat of even a single representative from such countries would exclude them from a list of countries where national competitive examinations could be held and they would have practically no chance of reaching the midpoint of their desirable range and might even become unrepresented again if their single representative were to leave the employment of the Organization. His delegation considered that the rules on the holding of national competitive examinations should be revised in order to accommodate the interest and concerns of the Member States that were represented below the midpoint of their desirable range with a lower limit equal to 1.

30. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Considerable progress had already been achieved towards human resources management reform but the process needed to be consolidated and institutionalized further. What was needed was a genuine reform designed to establish an objective, transparent and responsive human resources management system that would ensure a fair system of recruitment, placement and promotion, a transparent system of delegation of authority coupled with accountability, and an effective system for the administration of justice. His delegation would like reform to ensure the recruitment and retention of high-

quality staff on the basis of equitable geographical distribution in line with the obligations under the Charter. In that context, he regretted that currently over 72 per cent of staff members were from only 25 Member States, a situation that called for corrective action.

31. His delegation welcomed the innovative uses of information technology by the Secretariat in the area of human resources management, in particular the introduction of the Galaxy staff selection system which, his delegation hoped, would improve the recruitment process, in particular by reducing lead time.

32. His delegation found merit in the recommendation of the Secretary-General on staff mobility; horizontal and vertical mobility should be part of a comprehensive career development system. While mobility was sometimes said to erode institutional memory and knowledge and to create a class of generalists in the system, it was also true that it brought fresh blood and fresh ideas. There was a need for a balanced approach. While the delegation of authority was a method of ensuring effective management of the Organization, it was important that the managers should be made accountable for their decisions. His delegation would appreciate further details from the Secretariat as to how the question of monitoring the performance of managers would be approached.

33. There had been some improvement since 2000 in the selection of consultants and individual contractors from a wide geographical area and his delegation wished the Secretariat to continue its efforts to achieve further improvement, and in particular to engage more consultants and contractors from the developing countries.

34. Although the number of countries that had been invited to participate in the national competitive examinations had increased between 1998 and 2003, the situation was still far from satisfactory. Closer collaboration with Member States that were underrepresented or unrepresented in the Secretariat would be essential to attract young professionals from those countries.

35. **Mr. Al-Mansour** (Kuwait) said that his delegation supported the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was vital to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/258, which had been adopted as a comprehensive set of guidelines for the management of human resources.

36. The Secretary-General's reform was designed to enhance administrative systems through strategic change with a view to improving the quality and performance of the staff as well as enhancing the international civil service in general. A great deal had already been achieved along those lines. To that end, it was essential to have well-qualified managers who were responsible for the administration of their staff, as well as highly motivated and well-qualified staff. His delegation particularly wished to place on record its admiration for the staff, many of whom carried out their duties in difficult circumstances, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

37. His delegation had read with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414), which indicated that there had been some improvement in the proportion of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States in the Secretariat. In that connection, he was pleased to note that the Secretariat included a national of his own country in a senior post; he hoped that it would be possible to increase the number of Kuwaiti nationals so as to bring the representation of his country within the desirable range. Further efforts were still required to work towards the equitable geographical distribution of staff, which should be a fundamental component of the recruitment process, particularly in order to ensure that the incumbents of a number of senior posts were nationals of developing countries and that senior posts were not filled exclusively by nationals of a limited number of countries.

38. **Mr. Ham Sang-wook** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation was pleased to note the progress that had been made in the important task of human resources management reform. The reports on that matter covered a relatively short period of time, as the Advisory Committee had noted, and his delegation would like to be kept informed of the future progress of the reform.

39. The delegation of authority for human resources management should be accompanied by a clear understanding on the part of managers of their responsibilities and mandates and by sound mechanisms for monitoring accountability. His delegation looked forward to receiving a detailed

report on the system of the delegation of authority and the internal monitoring mechanism at the next session of the General Assembly.

40. He welcomed the progress that had been made in the use of information technology in the staff recruitment process, in particular the launch of the Galaxy system for staff selection. His delegation hoped that further development of the staff selection and evaluation system would promote transparency and enhance the monitoring capacity.

41. His delegation supported the general objective of managed mobility to ensure a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced staff. Managed mobility would improve the activities of the regional offices and strengthen the partnership among the staff. However, his delegation considered that there might be a case for further measures to promote mobility between Headquarters and the regional offices.

42. His delegation noted the improvements that had been achieved in recent years within the Secretariat with regard to geographical distribution and gender balance. The national competitive examination programme for entry into the Secretariat had proved to be an effective tool for ensuring the widest possible geographical representation and, in particular, for selecting the best qualified candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented Member States.

43. It was a matter of concern that the average age of the staff currently stood at 46.1 years and that almost 60 per cent of all Secretariat staff were over 45 years of age. His delegation hoped that the anticipated large number of retirements within the next five years would be taken as an opportunity to rejuvenate the staff of the Organization through recruitment. In conclusion, he reiterated his delegation's concern about the possible negative impact of a change in the mandatory age of separation of staff members.

44. **Mr. Yuwono** (Indonesia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Further efforts were required to reduce the level of underrepresentation of Member States in the United Nations Secretariat and, especially to reduce the number of unrepresented Member States, without lowering the quality of the personnel recruited. His delegation also supported efforts to ensure the adequate representation of women in the Secretariat, more particularly in senior positions.

45. The Secretary-General should continue to improve accountability and responsibility in the reform of human resources management. He commended the Secretary-General on his reform efforts, in particular, his emphasis on making the United Nations a results-oriented Organization. Efforts to streamline the Organization and improve its efficiency, thereby making economies and improving the delivery of goods and services and the implementation of programme activities, should be encouraged.

46. Since the members of the Secretariat were a key resource of the United Nations, efforts to recruit, train and retain staff were essential to building the future of the Organization. In that context, efforts to empower managers, improve their skills and increase their responsiveness to the objectives of the Organization were all highly important. The development of electronic tools and resources should also help to improve the efficiency of human resources and the monitoring of progress in the reform process and in the achievement of the Organization's goals. His Government favoured efforts to enhance the efficiency of the Organization, improve geographical representation in the Secretariat and bring the Organization up to date through the use of modern technology. Such changes must, however, be considered in the context of maximizing the benefits for the Organization, given its limited resources.

47. **Ms. Vrhovac** (Croatia) said that her delegation supported the Secretary-General's human resources management reforms. It noted with satisfaction the changes that had been introduced thus far and encouraged further improvements aimed at ensuring that the Organization's human resources management policies and practices were fully in line with its operational needs. All changes required time, however, particularly in an Organization as complex as the United Nations.

48. In order for the Organization to be more efficient, it must have qualified staff representing all of its Member States. The number of unrepresented Member States had declined during the five-year period from 1998 to 2002, but further steps were needed to improve geographical representation in the Secretariat. With a total of seven of its nationals employed by the Secretariat, Croatia was within its desirable range of representation, but still below the midpoint with regard to the element of weighted staff position. That fact pointed to another problem that affected new Member

States, namely, the absence of nationals appointed to senior posts.

49. Her delegation supported the concept of national competitive examinations as the most efficient method of recruiting qualified candidates from underrepresented Member States. The recent increase in the number of countries participating in the national competitive examination was heartening, as was the increase in the number of examination candidates who had been recruited by the Organization in 2002. It remained unclear, however, whether the length of the recruitment process had been shortened in comparison with previous national competitive examinations.

50. With regard to recruitment, placement and promotion activities, the introduction of the new web-based Galaxy system should enable the Organization both to attract and retain staff of the highest quality and to strengthen its management capacity. Moreover, a comprehensive and systematic technology-based staff selection system should considerably shorten the whole recruitment process.

51. On the subject of gender balance, her delegation acknowledged the efforts being made to improve gender distribution within the Secretariat. However, although the number of women in the Professional category had increased, much more needed to be done to achieve an acceptable gender balance at the senior level.

52. **Mr. Al-Atrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation welcomed the reform efforts of the Secretary-General, which were designed to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization. The staff, whether in the Professional or in the General Service category, were the principal element in the implementation of the proposed reforms; it was therefore important to involve them in the process and take their views into account as an essential element in the successful reform of human resources management.

53. It was a matter of concern to his delegation that the principle of the equitable geographical distribution of staff, including consultants, had not been satisfactorily complied with; the post structure at the senior levels and elsewhere in the Secretariat did not reflect that principle. His delegation therefore hoped that the Galaxy system for the selection of staff would lead to an improvement in the representation of the unrepresented and underrepresented Member States and would improve transparency and fairness in the recruitment process. His delegation looked forward to the submission by the Secretary-General of a comprehensive report on that and other matters connected with the reform of human resources management.

54. His delegation welcomed the appointment of the Ombudsman and hoped that the person appointed would receive the necessary support and would be given the authority to carry out fully the duties of the post. Increased coordination with other elements of the justice system, in particular the Joint Appeals Board, would strengthen the justice system in the United Nations and would achieve cost-savings and avoid duplication. It was particularly important to maintain the independence of the Organization's system of justice.

55. The delegation of authority required an improved system of accountability and oversight in monitoring the performance of programme managers, in particular to ensure that they were complying with the Staff Regulations and the Financial Regulations, as well as the resolutions of the General Assembly.

56. The reinvigoration of the Organization required measures to ensure the appointment of well-qualified young staff and his delegation hoped that substantial progress in that regard would be achieved as current staff members retired. Greater emphasis should be placed on providing training to enhance the skills of staff members.

57. **Ms. Nakian** (United States of America) said that her delegation generally concurred with the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/57/469). It noted with satisfaction the considerable progress that the Secretary-General and the staff of the Secretariat had made thus far towards creating an organizational culture that was more responsive and results-oriented, rewarded creativity and innovation and promoted continuous learning, high performance and managerial excellence. A great deal had been done to improve accountability, transparency, fairness and efficiency in the global Secretariat. The new staff selection system had further integrated recruitment, placement, managed mobility and promotion by, among other things, streamlining and rationalizing the selection process and giving programme managers more authority to make

staffing decisions. The shift from a voluntary to a managed approach to mobility was particularly welcome. In addition, the managed reassignment programme for junior Professional staff and the new measures for time-limited post occupancy and required lateral moves for promotion would help to encourage mobility and facilitate movement between locations and functions. That would in turn develop a more multi-skilled workforce of international civil servants and provide more varied and rewarding career opportunities.

58. While the changes that had been introduced to date would be consolidated and institutionalized in the years ahead, it was important constantly to pursue improvements that strengthened the vitality of the Organization. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the innovative ideas put forward in section VI of the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387), and the measures that had been proposed to enhance career opportunities for staff in the General Service category, help staff balance their professional and private lives, and rejuvenate the Organization by recruiting more people early in their careers. Those measures would help to foster excellence in the workforce and assist international civil servants in carrying out the important priorities set forth in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

59. Her delegation agreed that more needed to be done to achieve geographical diversity and gender balance, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter. In that connection, the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414) was a valuable reference for Member States to gauge the Secretariat's efforts in implementing the provisions of the Charter and the relevant resolutions dealing with representation. Her delegation was therefore disappointed to learn of the increase in the number of staff from overrepresented countries, even as many countries remained unrepresented, underrepresented or below their desirable ranges. Nationals of the United States of America fell within the latter category. The past several years had seen a dramatic decline in the number of United States nationals in the Secretariat, particularly at the senior Professional levels, and the Secretariat must take appropriate measures to address that concern.

60. Lastly, efforts must be made to measure and quantify the outcome of the reform proposals and initiatives. Such an evaluation, including identification of lessons learned, should be an integral part of the various reform initiatives. In that regard, her delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretary-General should prepare a comprehensive report on human resources management reform for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

61. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213 and with the decision taken by the Committee at its 13th meeting, **the Chairman** invited the President of the United Nations Staff Union to make a statement.

62. **Ms. Waters** (President of the United Nations Staff Union) said that when the Secretary-General had first begun his programme of reform in 1997, the staff representatives had fully supported the goal of creating an organizational culture that was responsive and results-oriented, rewarded creativity and innovation and promoted continuous learning, higher performance and managerial excellence. Since then, however, managers had been significantly empowered while the ability of the staff to influence and defend their futures had significantly weakened. The Staff Union would like to see a fair balance restored.

63. The Staff Union still considered career appointments to be the cornerstone of the international civil service and necessary for a fully confident and independent staff. Career appointments did not mean employment for life, and meaningful reviews could be conducted every five years to ensure that staff continued to merit their career appointments. Moreover, while continuing contracts lent more stability and financial support to staff currently on fixed-term contracts, they should not be seen as a replacement for career appointments. The Staff Union appealed to the Committee to request the Secretariat to develop, in consultation with staff representatives, a proposal that would allow a sufficient number of staff to retain career appointments. The Union had proposed to the Staff-Management Coordination Committee that all serving staff in the General Service and Professional categories who met the criteria for permanent appointment at the time they were hired should be converted to permanent status by virtue of their acquired rights and taking into account the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

64. On the subject of career development, she said that while organizational values, performance management and human resources planning were elements of a solid personnel system, they were not replacements for a true career development system, which should identify clear career paths and assist qualified staff in placement. Staff were willing to participate in training and to obtain higher levels of education, but they should not make such investments without an accompanying commitment that the Administration would do its part to provide the framework for a career with the Organization. The Fifth Committee should continue to impress upon the Administration that a system of career development for all categories of staff needed to be established.

65. The G-to-P examination was an integral part of career development. The Staff Union fully understood that Member States were anxious to have their nationals recruited as junior Professional staff. However, the Charter of the United Nations emphasized that the paramount consideration in the employment of staff was the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. In keeping with the best practices of employers, internal staff must have promotion opportunities that were commensurate with their abilities.

66. Staff in the General Service category were highly qualified and motivated and represented an increasing number of countries. Encouraging the promotion of those staff members to the Professional category would benefit the Organization, since high morale would be maintained among a group of experienced staff members who held much of the Organization's institutional memory. The improved morale would translate into increased productivity and greater relevance for United Nations programmes.

67. In his second report on reform (A/57/387), the Secretary-General had supported reconsideration of the issue. The Staff Union respectfully requested Member States to restore the principle that staff in the General Service category should be promoted to the Professional category through the G-to-P examination and to restore the former 30 per cent quota for filling posts through that examination. It also appealed to Member States to request the Secretariat to develop, through staff-management consultations, comprehensive alternatives to the current G-to-P examination for the consideration of the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to suspend the alignment of the G-to-P examination with the national competitive examinations until the review of the proposed alternatives was completed.

68. The Staff Union fully supported the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's second report, which sought to expand opportunities for staff in the General Service category and to help staff balance their professional and private lives. Those were much needed improvements for staff members and the Union hoped that the proposals would have the full support of Member States.

69. On the question of accountability, she pointed out that, while the Secretary-General had established a number of monitoring mechanisms to ensure that departments fulfilled their mandates efficiently, there were no mechanisms for personal accountability that dealt with individual abuses by managers. The staff representatives believed that the basis for individual accountability began with the internal justice system. The current system did not enjoy the confidence of the staff and needed to be made independent and brought directly under the authority of the Secretary-General. The current system of peer review was beneficial only if the decision on the final action to be taken was also made by peers. In the case of the Joint Appeals Board, recommendations made by peers were often overturned by the Administration when they were favourable to the appellant. Statistics on justice were misleading. The Administration agreed with the Joint Appeals Board when the Board's findings were not in favour of the appellant, but when findings supported the appellant, management's confidence in the Board dropped considerably. The alignment of certain aspects of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal with the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal had not been seriously considered during staff-management consultations and should be re-examined. The Staff Union strongly encouraged the Fifth Committee to recommend that a comprehensive review of the internal justice system should be immediately undertaken, in consultation with the staff representatives. Without major changes in the internal justice system, true accountability of managers would never be achieved.

70. While the words "accountability" and "responsibility" were repeatedly linked to the current reform, there were clear examples of the lack of both in the implementation of policies. Interpreters sat in

booths the size of closets, with poorly circulating air that contained potentially hazardous particulates. Most recently, they had been denied water in their booths. All members of the Administration agreed that interpreters worked under horrendous conditions and that water was essential, yet no one addressed the problem. Until such time as simple accountability issues were addressed, it would be difficult for any staff member to believe that more serious issues would be dealt with appropriately.

71. The tragedy of 11 September 2001 had conveyed a clear message that no one was safe. However, the answer to safety and security was not to build walls around delegates, treat staff members with suspicion, cast out retired colleagues and deny entry to the public. The United Nations belonged to the people of the world and should not be seen as a prison to keep staff members and delegates in and the rest of the world out. Even though threat levels were high everywhere in the world, the United Nations must not become an Organization that hid behind walls in fear, but rather an Organization that showed determination faithfully to continue its mission.

72. In conclusion, she said that it would be useful to both the Organization and its staff if Member States would encourage all managers to undertake consultations with their staff representatives in good faith. There had been several recent instances of managers informing staff representatives of decisions rather than giving them an opportunity to offer advice before the decision was taken. Best practices around the world indicated that the most successful enterprises were those that relied heavily on the wisdom of those who did the work.

73. She wished to draw the attention of the members of the Committee to an annex to her statement that was available at the back of the meeting room. The annex contained the views of the staff of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management on the restructuring of the Department.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.